

# FENELON:

OR,

## THE NUNS OF CAMBRAY.

A SERIOUS DRAMA,

IN

THREE ACTS.

(ALTERED FROM THE FRENCH.)

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BY

ROBERT MERRY, A. M.

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A PLAIN, UNVARNISH'D TALE.

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FENTON:  
THE MEN OF CAMBRIDGE  
A PERIODIC DRAMA  
[Entered at Stationers-Hall.]



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TO  
THE AUTHOR

OF THAT  
EXCELLENT POEM

CALLED  
The Pleasures of Memory;

WITH  
EVERY SENTIMENT OF ADMIRATION AND ESTEEM,

*THIS DRAMA*

IS DEDICATED.

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## Characters.

FENELON, *Archbishop of Cambray.*

DELMANCE, *Governor of the Town.*

ELOISA.

AMELIA.

ISAURA.

ABBESS.

*Priests, Nuns, and Attendants.*

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*Scene in Cambray.*

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N. B. This simple Drama is said to be founded on fact.



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FENELON:  
OR,  
*THE NUNS OF CAMBRAY.*

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ACT I.

*SCENE—A Convent at Cambray.*

*Enter AMELIA and ISAURA.*

ISAURA.

SOON, my Amelia! shall the blissful hour  
Approach, to bear your holy vows to heaven;  
You've pass'd the proof, and hov'ring angels wait  
To bid you welcome at the shrine of peace.  
Sweet are the joys of pure, celestial love,  
When midnight piety pours forth the hymn  
Of gratitude and hope! sweet the delights  
Of matin prayer, and vesper's solemn song:  
Sweet are the sacred silence and content  
That reign within these walls—but ah! I fear  
My words convey no rapture to your heart;  
Methinks you struggle with some hidden grief,  
Some worldly wav'rings—speak—confide in me.

AMELIA.

Isaura! dare I utter it to thee?  
And yet I've prov'd thy kindness—but, alas!  
I know not why perhaps—as the dread time  
Comes near, and nearer, to demand my oath,  
And to inter me in this convent-tomb;  
My fancy shudders, my affrighted soul  
Shrinks from the horrid sacrifice.

ISAURA.

What mean you?

AMELIA.

I'm ignorant of my parents, and I'd fain  
Discover those who gave me life—I languish  
To pay them love and duty, or afford them  
Comfort,—if in grief.

ISAURA.

Is this the reason?

AMELIA.

Besides, I've learnt to weigh my own desires,  
Have ponder'd much upon this cloister'd state,  
Of endless, sad seclusion.—Holy peace  
Dwells not within these melancholy walls,  
But stifled passion combats with despair.  
I will not therefore now devote myself—  
For I abhor what once I fondly wish'd.  
Nay more—I've had a strange alarm—Last night

As

As slow I wander'd in the solemn gloom,  
Near the lone vault where yonder winding stairs  
Lead to the chapel—when the doleful dirge  
Was finish'd—yielding up my thoughts to sorrow—  
A hollow groan burst dreadful on my ear.  
I hasten'd tow'ards the sound, then paus'd, and listen'd;  
Again I caught the feeble notes of woe,  
That murmur'd in a sepulchre beneath.

ISAURA.

Banish the recollection.

AMELIA.

Tell me why.

ISAURA.

Am I not troubled, think you? does my cheek  
Betray no pallid symptom of contrition,  
And does my tongue not falter?—O Amelia!  
Let this event be buried in oblivion,  
Or hid at least in secrecy :—But, lo!  
The Abbess comes—If you regard your safety;  
If the fair light of day be dear to you;  
If dungeons you can dread, or ling'ring death,  
Speak not to her of what you last night heard.

*Enter* ABBESS.

ABBESS.

Amelia, I've been seeking thee—Isaura!

FENELON: OR,

Leave us awhile—

[*Exit* ISAURA.]

The wish'd-for time draws nigh,  
That shall secure your happiness.

AMELIA.

Ah me!

ABBESS.

Soon shall your consecrated soul be Heav'n's :  
Meek votary of Religion, 'tis your lot  
To be à future angel, and meanwhile  
To pass on earth a life unstain'd by evil,  
And undisturb'd by care.

AMELIA.

The new Archbishop—

ABBESS.

Has left the court, and hither bends his course :—  
The pious prelate will arrive at Cambray  
Before the close of day.

AMELIA.

Wretch that I am!

ABBESS.

What matchless glory shall distinguish thee ;—  
E'en Fenelon, the pious and rever'd,  
Shall bind the sacred veil upon thy brow.

AME-



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AMELIA.

He is reported gen'rous, equitable,  
And most humane; zealous, but not severe;  
Incapable to force the female heart.

ABBESS.

Thy heart, my child! requires not force, I trust,  
To give itself to Heav'n;—no impious murmur  
Will it send forth;—no wish hast thou to prove  
The vain delights of a deceitful world.

AMELIA.

O hearken, and forgive me!

ABBESS.

Ha! what say'st thou?

AMELIA.

The coming time alarms me.

ABBESS.

How! alarms you!

AMELIA.

And will the vows for ever, ever bind me?

ABBESS.

Doubtless they will.

AME-

AMELIA.

The dread idea shakes me.

ABBESS.

Indeed!

AMELIA.

I beg thee grant me some delay,  
Nor am I yet prepar'd.

ABBESS.

What do I hear?—  
Delay! not yet prepar'd!

AMELIA.

I said, delay—  
I do implore thee but for one short month.

ABBESS.

Is't possible?—Is it Amelia speaks,  
Whose zeal was so impatient?—What event  
Has wrought this sudden, impious change?

AMELIA.

Alas!

ABBESS.

Methinks you hesitate!

AME-

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AMELIA.

And if I do—  
And if perchance I should refuse—would it  
Be criminal?

ABBESS.

Dare you thus talk to me!

AMELIA.

Without a blush I dare avow the truth—  
For if my tongue should utter the cold vow,  
My heart would contradict it—No, I cannot  
Enter the trying state,—I cannot bear  
To pass a life of death—I wish to seek  
The authors of my being—now unknown.  
The infant bird on daring pinion soars,  
And finds from Heav'n protection; so may I.  
But should I take the veil, hope would be lost,  
And what were this existence void of hope?

ABBESS.

You think to soften, but you irritate;—  
Religion may *demand* its votary;  
Then let no evil wav'rings change your purpose,  
Which late was duly and devoutly fix'd.—  
Your parents, girl, whose merited, sad fate  
You eagerly request to be inform'd of,  
Were vicious, poor, abandon'd, despicable;—  
Had it not been for holy Charity,

And

And the pure workings of meek Mercy *here*,  
 You would have dy'd in ignominious want,  
 Or liv'd amongst the rabble of the world,  
 A child of chance, an unprotected creature;  
 To *anguish* doom'd on *earth*, to *worse hereafter*.  
 But from so dire a threaten'd destiny  
 My care has rescued, and my kindness sav'd you:—  
 Yet now you wish to leave me, and refuse  
 The blest asylum of eternal joy,  
 Which, while an infant, was prepar'd for you.  
 Is this the recompence of all my love?  
 And is it thus you prove your gratitude?—  
 But 'tis in vain you would oppose my will,  
 Or counteract your own felicity.

AMELIA.

The earnest supplication of despair  
 May yet, perchance, prevail—

ABBESS.

Nor tears, entreaties,  
 Nor e'en resistance, shall befriend you—Heav'n,  
 Thro' me, has pointed out the proper means,  
 By which to hide your own and mother's shame.

AMELIA.

Was I debas'd before I saw the light,  
 And stamp'd with ignominy, yet unborn?  
 It cannot be; eternal justice rules.

Since,



Since, then, I did not choose my destiny,  
 I need not blush for what was merely casual.  
 My lot is certain sorrow, but not shame;  
 For shame can only mark the criminal,  
 And a base birth can never be *my* crime.  
 Kindly, in truth, you rear'd my infancy,  
 Nor from my memory shall time erase  
 The benefit—if such I now can deem it.  
 Yet have my parents, so despis'd and censur'd,  
 Giv'n to this heart a sentiment of pride,  
 Or fortitude, which, howsoever faulty,  
 Cannot submit to harshness of command.  
 By mildness led, I was submissive, timid,  
 And humble, as my station might require;  
 But now your rigour makes my soul intrepid.

ABBESS.

Nay, check this wild discourse; it ill becomes you.

AMELIA.

Then hear my firm resolve.—I'll not pronounce  
 The vow thro' fear—my tongue disdains a falsehood.  
 No,—I will supplicate the righteous priest—  
 Or, in default of words, will clasp his knees  
 With dumb expression of such potent anguish,  
 That he shall feel it as his bounden duty,  
 To save me from distraction and despair.

ABBESS.

Enough of this—reflect, rash maid, awhile

C

Upon

Upon th' increasing dangers that surround you,—  
 Altho' the friendship, which I sometime cherish'd,  
 Is pass'd away—compassion still remains :  
 But should you urge me further, 'twill subside.  
 I therefore counsel you a temp'rate conduct—  
 For know, your call is, stern necessity ;  
 Then force your stubborn will, or dread my vengeance.  
[Exit ABBESS.]

## AMELIA.

Her vengeance !—Can so vile a passion dwell  
 With one who consecrates her days to pray'r ?  
 Surely my sense deceiv'd me, or I heard  
 Some evil spirit speaking with *her* tongue.  
 And what, alas ! is my alleg'd offence  
 To call forth such a threat ?—*but* Nature's weakness,  
 And that might claim forgiveness—Pow'r supreme !  
 Who rul'st creation,—thou art not a tyrant,  
 But all indulgent, all benevolent.  
 O cannot I 'midst *other* scenes adore thee,  
 Than these of chill, sequester'd misery ?  
 I *will* abjure the ties of violence,  
 And prove the mind is free. Who's there—Isaura ?

*Enter ISAURA.*

## ISAURA.

I hasten'd hither to advise with thee—  
 What hast thou done ?—The Abbess is enrag'd—  
 Hast thou said aught imprudent, or receiv'd

Her

Her mandates with an air of petulance?  
If thou hast *either*, much I tremble for thee.  
Her eyes were full of fury and revenge.

AMELIA.

The rigid haughtiness, the fierce demeanour,  
Instead of humbling me, excited horror.

ISAURA.

But does she know that your reluctant soul—

AMELIA.

I told her all—laid open to her view  
The workings of my heart; my deep dismay,  
My fix'd repugnance to monastic life,  
Were not conceal'd—then, trembling, I averr'd,  
That I would never be induc'd by threats  
To take th' abhorred oath.

ISAURA.

What answer'd she?

AMELIA.

She lour'd with angry brow at my discourse,  
And mutter'd vengeance.

ISAURA.

What have you resolv'd?

AMELIA.

To keep my word, nor will I *ever* break it.

ISAURA.

Attend, Amelia, to the truths I utter ;—  
For I will freely speak.—You see me here,  
A victim to my own detested vows :—  
 Oft-times, indeed, I've led you to suppose  
 This dull confinement was pure happiness ;  
 Yet 'twas not from deceit I spoke, but pity—  
 Lest you should feel too soon th' impending weight.

AMELIA.

Alas ! I long have fear'd that your poor heart  
 Was prey'd upon by hopeless wretchedness :  
 I've mark'd your secret sighs, your silent tears.

ISAURA.

I will not now expatiate on the cause,  
 Which fatally compell'd me to retreat  
 Within the walls of this cold monast'ry—  
 It were a tale of sad severity.  
 For twice eight years I've counted the dull days  
 That heavily crept on ; and wept my fate :—  
 Around me all appears a sepulchre.

AMELIA.

O pause a moment, while my sorrows flow !

ISAU-



ISAURA.

You were but in your cradle when I enter'd—  
And to watch o'er your infancy has been  
My only consolation.

AMELIA.

My soul thanks you.

ISAURA.

But now, in sad return for all my care,  
I find *you* miserable as *myself*;  
Then be *not more so* :—O belov'd Amelia!  
Trust my well-founded fear, nor aggravate  
Your suff'rings by an impotent resistance;  
For I could prove the danger that attends it;  
Could tell you something of most dreadful import—  
Of chastisement beyond all thought severe,  
That would indeed convince you.

AMELIA.

Ha! convince me!

ISAURA.

It still continues after many years.—

AMELIA.

Explain this mystery.

ISAURA.

*I should* be silent;

But

But forc'd obedience yields to my alarm;  
Then learn the direful secret.

AMELIA.

Heav'ns! what is it?

ISAURA.

Are we unheard, and unobserv'd?

AMELIA.

Explain.

ISAURA.

The lamentable cries you last night notic'd,—  
Those cries—

AMELIA.

I quake with terror; but proceed—

ISAURA.

Speak low—we've ev'ry thing to fear.

AMELIA.

Those cries—

ISAURA.

I waver—

AMELIA.

Waver, do you?

ISAURA.

ISAURA.

Yes—Ah me!

I neither can be silent, nor dare speak.

AMELIA.

Alas! this is no season for concealment.

ISAURA.

Those lamentable cries—

AMELIA.

I do beseech thee—

ISAURA.

Were utter'd by a hopeless female, chain'd  
In a dark vault beneath.

AMELIA.

What do I hear?—

ISAURA.

A shocking truth.

AMELIA.

Excessive inhumanity!

A hopeless female, said you?

ISAURA.

One, most wretched!

AME-

AMELIA.

Does she then know you? have you spoken with her?  
Can we relieve her?

ISAURA.

I have often seen her.

AMELIA.

What, in a hideous dungeon?—tell me where.

ISAURA.

Between the chapel and the garden wall,  
For sev'nteen years has she been slowly dying;  
It is my office, at the break of dawn,  
To bear her bread and water, which but serve  
To lengthen out her pangs.

AMELIA.

Know you her name?

ISAURA.

I never dar'd to hold discourse with her.

AMELIA.

And are you also ign'rant of her *crime*?

ISAURA.

I only am acquainted with her *woe*.

AME-



AMELIA.

Ere I'd unite me with this murd'rous band  
Of shameless hypocrites, I'd meet perdition.  
How her fate interests my troubled spirit!  
If you have tenderness or love for me—

ISAURA.

Can you doubt either?

AMELIA.

Lead me to her.

ISAURA.

You—Amelia!

AMELIA.

Yes—nor let us lose a moment.

ISAURA.

How could you assist her?

AMELIA.

I'd soothe her grief,  
Mingle my sighs with her's, and wipe the tears  
From her dim eyes.

ISAURA.

It is a cruel sight!

D

AME-

AMELIA.

I will not be refus'd.

ISAURA.

Should they discover—

AMELIA.

You love me, and my heart repays your love,—  
Grant me this boon; indulge me, kind Isaura!

ISAURA.

I will—Protecting Heav'n, watch over us!

[*Exeunt.*]

---

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

---

*SCENE—A Dungeon in the Convent—A Lamp burning—A Loaf of Bread, and a Pitcher of Water—ELOISA, in Chains, asleep upon Straw.*

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ELOISA (*raising herself languidly, and wildly*).

YES, I again shall view the fertile plains  
Of Languedoc, where first I drew my breath—  
And is it thou, my lord?—O, no; I've lost thee!  
*This* is a prison, *this* my dark abode,  
Where I have linger'd on so many years.  
Ah me! I scarcely have the pow'r of utterance—  
Here is my grave, and these impervious walls  
Hold me for life, and death;—yet, yet, at times  
A ray of feeble hope illumines my heart,  
And my weak, wand'ring fancy paints fair scenes  
Of earthly happiness to come!—'Tis wrong  
Thus to deceive my reason, for I know  
My only portion is despair—then Heav'n  
Be merciful, and suffer me to die.

*Enter AMELIA and ISAURA.*

ISAURA.

Let us advance—

AMELIA.

She sleeps—

ISAURA.

You weep, my child!

AMELIA.

O Nature! look upon your wretched creature.

ISAURA.

Amelia, you have *seen* her—we'll retire—

AMELIA.

No—

ISAURA.

My senses are dismay'd—come, come away.

AMELIA.

I *will* remain.

ISAURA.

Then I must quit thee.

AME-



AMELIA.

Do so—  
But soon return.

ISAURA.

You must not—

AMELIA.

I'm resolv'd—  
Tho' grief is in my heart, 'tis mingled with  
Something like transport;—and I will enjoy  
The soft, the dear emotions, that I prove.

ISAURA.

I have not pow'r indeed to oppose your will,  
Yet with alarm and deep regret I leave you.

[Exit ISAURA.]

AMELIA.

This awful silence, these damp-dropping walls,  
These gloomy arches, yonder pallid lamp,  
That feebly struggles with surrounding darkness,  
Make my soul sicken—Poor neglected victim!  
Methinks she sighs, and wakens.

ELOISA.

Ha! what voice  
Is that, which seems to call me from the tomb?

AME-

AMELIA.

I ne'er was so much mov'd; a new sensation  
Thrills ev'ry nerve.

ELOISA.

It is a stranger's tongue!

AMELIA (*taking ELOISA's hand*).

I love, and pity you; be not afraid!

ELOISA.

Come then, meek angel! come, and solace me;  
Your tears bedew my hand, and your soft eyes  
Are fondly fix'd on mine—nay, I am sure  
You are compassionate.

AMELIA.

O strong attraction!—  
Tell me your sorrows, they shall all be mine—  
And I will ransack each inventive pow'r,  
And ev'ry possible resource, to comfort,—  
Perchance to set you free—

ELOISA.

It is in vain—  
*Decided* is my destiny—Yet hear,  
Benignant maiden, hear! there was a time  
When brightest prospects open'd to my view—  
Pow'r, splendour, riches, tenderness, and love!

AME-

AMELIA.

Do not renew your suff'rings, gentle lady!  
'Twas rash in me to urge you—

ELOISA.

No, 'twill soothe me.—  
The illustrious blood of princely d'Arlemont  
Flows in my veins—yet that has caus'd my ruin:  
Else had my marriage been the source of joy:  
For tho' Delmance, my lord, had neither wealth  
Nor royal blood to boast of, he had honour,  
Benevolence, unparallel'd affection,  
Valour, and truth; yet these high qualities  
Could not subdue my father's ire—

AMELIA.

Unhappy—

ELOISA.

My tender mother, on her bed of death,  
Heard the confession of my nuptial vow,  
And just ere she expir'd—breath'd forth her blessing,  
O had she liv'd, she would have pleaded for me!

AMELIA.

How dear was such a mother!

ELOISA.

Dear, and good—  
Too good indeed for hapless Eloisa!

At

At length my father—ignorant of my state—  
 Prepar'd to take me into Germany,  
 That he might wed me to some potent prince.  
 I therefore was compell'd to avow the truth,  
 And on my knees to supplicate forgiveness.  
 "O let me stay," I cried, "with my lov'd Delmance;  
 "I ask for nothing more."

AMELIA.

Could he resist you?

ELOISA.

He had me privately convey'd away,  
 At dead of night, ere I could write to Delmance,  
 And brought me to these unrelenting women,  
 With charge to treat me with severity.  
 A short time after, I became a mother:  
 But I was deem'd a frail one, and my child  
 Offspring of shame; for, in his bitter rage,  
 My father said, I'd forfeited my honour.  
 For this I've languish'd many a tedious year,  
 Lost to the world, abandon'd by the skies.  
 But now, though it be strange, my woes seem light-  
     en'd—  
 Your presence surely yields me consolation.

AMELIA.

Thy plaintive accents penetrate my soul,  
 Where true affection mingles with respect.—  
 Yet think not I am sordid in my tears;

They



They flow for thee alone, not for myself;  
Tho' thus I also shall be punish'd.

ELOISA.

How!  
You punish'd also thus? Eternal mercy!

AMELIA.

Such is the fate I must expect, unless  
My tongue shall utter vows which I abhor.

ELOISA.

And are your cruel parents leagu'd against you?

AMELIA.

I do not know my parents!—

ELOISA.

Have you not prov'd a mother's kind protection?  
Ah! then I pity you.

AMELIA.

Can you forget  
Your own afflictions thus to mourn for me?  
Methinks they should have made your heart obdurate.

ELOISA.

No—they have made me more compassionate;  
Adversity, alas! must teach us kindness—  
Prosperity's unfeeling and severe.

AMELIA.

And is there not amid these horrid cells  
One sympathizing female to console you?

ELOISA.

*She* who at first brought me my daily food,  
Was harsh and arrogant—but now *another*,  
Mild and benign, performs the regular task,  
And sometimes I've observ'd the silent tear  
Steal down her cheek—nay, she has sav'd my life,  
If I can call it life, by better nourishment  
And gentler treatment—Only Heav'n has known it,  
And Heav'n, I trust, will be her recompence!

AMELIA.

How can you thus *alone* employ your hours?

ELOISA.

By thinking on my husband and my daughter.

AMELIA.

And is that husband's memory still so dear?

ELOISA.

Yes; more than ever *lov'd*, than ever *honour'd*.

AMELIA.

How has your love surviv'd such cruel pains?

ELOISA.

ELOISA.

How could I e'er forget my Delmance! if  
A moment were unoccupied by him,  
I should be desolate; at present *dead*,  
I *live* on what is pass'd—and then our child,  
The pledge of early faith, is mingled with  
The fond reflection—Hapless girl! torn from me  
The instant of thy birth, to this dark tomb  
Thou never hast been brought to bless my sight!

AMELIA.

What! are you ignorant of a husband's fate,  
And of a daughter's too?—

ELOISA.

Of both—tho' now I deem myself a widow—  
And for my unprotected child!—she was  
Conceiv'd in sorrow, and in anguish born;  
Then ravish'd from me by these ruthless nuns,  
E'en from my very bosom—I remember  
That day of horror was the ninth of June.

AMELIA.

O Providence! then first I saw the light.

ELOISA.

Where, where?

AMELIA.

Within this convent.

ELOISA.

And your age?

AMELIA.

Seventeen.

ELOISA.

Your name?

AMELIA.

Amelia.

ELOISA.

O! you are,

You are my child!—I claim you for my own.

AMELIA.

And thou'rt my mother!

*[Falling on the neck of ELOISA.]*

ELOISA.

Yes, thy name, Amelia,

Is *that* my mother bore, now doubly dear.

I begg'd those savage nuns would give it thee—

And they assented, while my bursting tears

Rain'd on thy cherub cheek.—

AMELIA.

O blissful moment!—false, inhuman Abbess!

She



She told me that thou wert a sinful creature,  
Who fled, and left me here, the child of shame!

ELOISA.

The Heav'ns have heard my pray'rs—my woes are  
ended.

AMELIA.

Have *you*, my *mother*, for so long a time,  
Endur'd these torments?

ELOISA.

They are all forgotten.—  
Come, let me press thee to my raptur'd heart—  
Thy father, Delmance, is alive in thee.  
Such his expressive countenance—My treasure!  
Thou 'rt here—I have thee fast—and I will hold thee  
Till my last pulse—this, this is ecstasy!

*Enter ISAURA.*

ISAURA.

Amelia, hasten from this dreary scene.

ELOISA.

You shall not tear her from me.

AMELIA.

She's my mother.

ISAURA.

FENELON: OR,

ISAURA.

Your mother!

AMELIA.

Yes, beyond all doubt.

ISAURA.

If so,

Your woes will only be more terrible—  
Archbishop Fenelon is now arriv'd.

AMELIA.

Heav'n then inspires my heart with hope.

ISAURA.

What mean you?

AMELIA.

I will fly to him, tell him all—implore—  
Compel him to be just and merciful.

ISAURA.

How can you hence escape?

AMELIA.

'Tis you must aid me.

ISAURA.

To-morrow he will come to approve your vows.

AMELIA.

Nay, speak not of to-morrow—view my mother.

ISAURA.

Reflect upon the danger.

AMELIA.

Nature scorns it.

ISAURA.

Tow'rds evening, by a secret door, perhaps—

AMELIA.

What! wait till evening?

ISAURA.

Else you'll be discover'd!—

The garden wall that joins the street—

AMELIA.

Is not so very high, but I'll spring over it.

ELOISA.

Think on thy mother, think on Eloisa!

And O! preserve thy life for me, my child!

AMELIA.

Since I have found thee on this happy day,

'Twill be in all things prosperous!

ELOISA.

ELOISA.

Wait awhile.

AMELIA.

Be comforted—you shall be quickly freed  
From these degrading chains—Lead on, Isaura!

[*Exeunt AMELIA and ISaura, and the scene closes.*]

*SCENE—The Archbishop's Palace.*

*Enter FENELON and DELMANCE.*

FENELON.

NAY, Delmance, think not I can e'er forget  
Our early, infant friendship.

DELMANCE.

O! if *you*  
Can cherish the remembrance, how must I,  
Who feel it *honour*?

FENELON.

Pray, no more of that—  
A prelate's honour is humanity:  
Nor shall the flock committed to my care,  
Find me a pastor negligent or harsh.—

O! I



O! I would fain relieve each human suff'ring,  
 Wipe from the widow's cheek her falling tears,  
 And be the orphan's comforter—now, indeed,  
 Expansive pity settles on yourself;  
 Your woes affect me deeply.

DELMANCE.

Generous friend!  
 I fear'd to tell my weakness, fear'd to offend  
 Your holy ear with a sad tale of love.

FENELON.

No shame attends on virtuous love; it is  
 The first, best gift of Providence to man.

DELMANCE.

A life of gratitude could ill requite  
 Your fond indulgence and desire to soothe me.—  
 But O! the loss of her whom I deplore,  
 Cannot be banish'd from my memory  
 By pity or by time—

FENELON.

Yet *bear* with patience—

DELMANCE.

Awhile I sought amid the toils of war,  
 And in the front of danger, to dispel

F

The

The afflictive tenderness ; but not the rage  
Of battle, nor its thunders, could control  
The still, small voice of Nature ;—cruel Death  
Shun'd my embrace.—

## FENELON.

Yield not to such despair !  
For often, from the centre of affliction,  
Shoots forth a vivifying flame of joy,  
And Heav'n, by secret means, unknown to mortals,  
Sends comfort to the agitated soul.  
These are the words of Fenelon.—'Tis true,  
Your heart is shipwreck'd on a barren shore,  
And all around seems desolate and drear ;  
But a bright morn *may* rise, and fairest scenes  
Expand themselves before you—flow'rs of peace  
May unexpected spring beneath your feet.

## DELMANCE.

Ah ! no—the midnight darkness of my mind  
Can ne'er be chas'd by any ray of hope ;  
To think on what *has been*, suffer what *is*,  
Remains alone for me—But one approaches—  
A nun—novitiate—

## FENELON.

One who seems distress'd !

*Enter*

*Enter* AMELIA.

AMELIA.

My lord! permit a wretched maid—

FENELON.

Why weep you?

AMELIA.

I would inform you—

FENELON.

Of some slight fault perhaps,  
Or of some crime to which you are the victim.

DELMANCE.

To you *alone* she wishes to reveal  
Whate'er it be—I therefore will retire.

[*Exit* DELMANCE.]

FENELON.

Be confident; fear nothing.—

AMELIA.

The unfortunate—

FENELON.

Are all *my* family; I am their father.

FENELON: OR,

AMELIA.

On my knees—

FENELON.

Rise—you should *only* kneel to Heav'n.

AMELIA.

Alas !

My feeble voice expires upon my lips.

FENELON.

This natural timidity affects me—

Say, what has brought you hither ?

AMELIA.

Much affliction—

I fly a hated cloister.

FENELON.

You have been

To blame—

AMELIA.

Despair must expiate my offence.

FENELON.

Perchance the rigour of eternal vows

Makes your young heart revolt ?

AME-



AMELIA.

It does indeed  
Revolt at tyranny, but 'tis not for  
Myself I now would plead—

FENELON.

For whom then?—quickly—

AMELIA.

For a poor suff'ring lady, who may boast  
Illustrious blood, and whose misfortune is  
To have been my mother.

FENELON.

Tell me of her woes,  
And I will haste to succour her—in truth,  
Her frailty shall not have *reproach*, but *pardon*.

AMELIA.

Nay, now you err, my lord! she is not frail—  
The lady Eloisa is a widow—  
At least, she so thro' fear reputes herself—  
The virtuous relict of lord Delmance.—

FENELON.

How!  
But this is strange—[*aside*—] Joyful discovery!  
Say where she is, I promise to relieve her—  
This agony o'erpow'rs you.—

AME-

AMELIA.

Blessings on you!—

In the dark dungeon of a convent, buried,  
She has mourn'd for sev'nteen years.

FENELON.

And can this be?

Base policy! unequall'd cruelty!—

Wait a few moments in the adjoining hall,

I will be there anon—but I must first

Speak with a friend on matters of import.—

Then shall you lead me to the dreary scene,

And give your suff'ring parent, liberty.

[Exit AMELIA.

Is my lord Delmance there? I fain would see him.—

*Enter DELMANCE.*

No more submit to irreligious grief,

Nor e'er mistrust the ways of Providence!

Methinks you yet have happiness in store.

DELMANCE.

The joys that I have lost cannot return!

FENELON.

Perhaps they may!

DELMANCE,

Ah, no—impossible!

The

The earth has not another Eloisa—  
My languid life is fading fast away,  
And, like a shrub that prematurely withers,  
I soon shall sink into the dust.

FENELON.

Your woes  
Shall not endure.

DELMANCE.

What! can I e'er forget  
The faithful pangs that rend my tortur'd breast?—  
There is no hope for me!

FENELON.

Yes, there *is* hope:  
She, whose imagin'd death you so lament—

DELMANCE.

How! say'st thou?

FENELON.

Is alive.

DELMANCE.

Can it be true?  
O let me spring with lightning swiftness to her,  
And strain her to my heartstrings—yet, alas!  
This must be some illusion of the brain!

FENE-

FENELON.

'Tis verity—but check these sudden transports,  
 Nor die of too much joy—you're still a husband;  
 Nay more, a father—Eloisa lives  
 In Cambray—

DELMANCE.

With my child—O boundless rapture!  
 Look forth, bright sun, and view the happiest man  
 That ever trod this earth—but are you sure?

FENELON.

The beauteous novice, whom you just beheld,  
 Is Eloisa's daughter, and your child.

DELMANCE.

Say! am I not in Heav'n?—'twas potent instinct  
 Entranc'd my senses as I gaz'd upon her.

FENELON.

For many a year, in sad imprisonment,  
 Has Eloisa wept—by the harsh mandates  
 Of over-zealous and mistaken nuns;  
 But all shall now be well.—

DELMANCE.

And did my child  
 Come hither to implore for Eloisa?  
 The pray'rs of innocence prevail.—But, ah!

What



What treatment for the treasure of my soul!  
Base superstition! mockery of religion!  
Inhuman monsters! yet 'tis past away—  
And joy disperses every angry thought.  
Let us be gone—delay were madness to me.

FENELON.

I will attend thee now—but O! beware,  
Nor rush too suddenly upon her sight:  
It might prove fatal—rather wait awhile  
In readiness, until I have prepar'd  
Her agitated mind to meet her husband.

DELMANCE.

Considerate Fenelon, your word controls me.

FENELON.

Your lovely daughter, who attends our coming  
In the next chamber, is to be our guide.  
But do not yet embrace her, or make known  
You are her father, till a little time  
Permit it safely.—Delmance, trust in Heav'n!

[*Exeunt.*]

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END OF THE SECOND ACT.

## ACT III.

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SCENE—*The Dungeon.*

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ELOISA.

THE pitying Nun comes not to bless my sight—  
My too impatient soul is so disturb'd,  
I dare not hope—habitual wretchedness  
Has troubled ev'ry sense—Yet I'm a mother!—  
And that sweet tie binds me to life anew.  
But, ah! what dreadful fate, perhaps, o'erhangs  
My poor Amelia—how the thought distracts me!  
O may some angel, with protecting wing,  
Shield her from all calamity, and guide  
Her steps for ever!—What sound is that?

*Enter ISAURA.*

ISAURA.

Alas!

ELOISA.

Wherefore that sigh? you chill me with affright.  
Is my Amelia safe? my darling daughter!

ISAURA.

ISAURA.

Fear *not* for her—

ELOISA.

Proceed—I breathe again.

ISAURA.

Nay, do not yet exult; a threat'ning storm  
Seems ready now to burst, and overwhelm us.

ELOISA.

O whence this rising terror?—tell me all.

ISAURA.

The watchful Abbess, from her lattice, mark'd  
Amelia's flight—

ELOISA.

Then she has fled?

ISAURA.

She has  
Indeed escap'd.

ELOISA.

Blessed be Heav'n!—at length  
My woes are past.

ISAURA.

Danger respected her;

A hand invisible sustain'd her steps.  
Wildly from thee she rush'd, then cross'd the garden,  
Like a young roe, and vaulted o'er the wall.  
As traversing the street, her eager voice  
Cried, I've receiv'd no harm—hasten, Isaura!  
Fly to console my mother.

ELOISA.

O my sweet child!

ISAURA.

But let us now beware of the fell band,  
The impious females of this hated place,  
Who meditate, with unrelenting rage,  
To increase our woe.

ELOISA.

Said'st thou—*increase* my woe!  
Nay, that till *now* had been impossible—  
But *now* I have a daughter!

ISAURA.

She's in safety;  
At least I trust she is.

ELOISA.

Then I defy  
Their fury, if it fall alone on me.

ISAURA.



ISAURA.

Hark! they are now descending.

ELOISA.

Let them come.

*Enter ABBESS and Nuns.*

ELOISA.

[*To the ABBESS.*

Thou ruthless monster—glut thy cruelty  
With gazing on my long-protracted torments;  
Slake thy fell thirst with these continual tears,  
And glory in my grief.

ABBESS.

Vile woman, peace—  
We have discover'd a mysterious crime.—  
What do'st thou in this cell, Isaura?

ISAURA.

Madam!—

ABBESS.

You hesitate—I am convinc'd.

ISAURA.

I only—  
Came here—to mention—

ABBESS.

ABBESS.

The rash girl's departure—  
Whom you have lately introduc'd, I find,  
To this secluded vault.

ISAURA.

Disastrous day!

ABBESS.

'Tis true what I assert.

ISAURA.

And I avow it :  
It was my proper act ; and if a fault,  
Why punish *me*.

ABBESS.

Traitress, I shall do so,  
And with severity.

ELOISA.

Art thou not weary,  
Heav'n ! to behold such boundless tyranny ?—  
She did her duty ; for she sav'd my child.

ABBESS.

Your child ?

ELOISA.

ELOISA.

My *own*;—  
Did I not give her life?

ABBESS.

Who told you this?

ELOISA.

'Twas Nature—and our hearts.

ABBESS.

Blush, if you can;  
And may the shame confound you!

ELOISA.

'Tis *yourself*  
Who ought to feel a burning on the cheek;—  
Eternal Justice! weigh our separate crimes  
In equal scales, and her that may be found  
The greater culprit, strike with instant death.—  
You shrink from the appeal.

ABBESS.

Do you presume  
To justify the criminal, loose love,  
Which brought a father's malediction on you?  
'Tis penitence alone can obtain mercy;  
Of that you've need.

ELOISA.

ELOISA.

But how shalt thou escape  
Eternal vengeance? thou must answer for  
The rending torments I have suffer'd here;  
Give a severe account of all my wrongs  
By thee inflicted.—If that I have err'd,  
*My fault was love, but thine was causeless hate.*  
Mortals were form'd for union and affection;  
Dungeons and chains are not the work of Heav'n!

ABBESS.

Cease, cease this most abhorred blasphemy;—  
Do you not tremble at my pow'r?

ELOISA.

I scorn it.

ABBESS.

Your scorn will not avail; here I command.

ELOISA.

Perhaps your tyranny is near its end.

ABBESS.

What is this expectation?—pray, instruct me.

ELOISA.

Amelia shall deliver—

ABBESS.



ABBESS.

Shall be punish'd—  
She is retaken.

ELOISA.

Do I live to hear it?

ABBESS.

She will be instantly brought back, to learn  
How a rebellious spirit may be tam'd.

ELOISA.

Nay, murder me at once, but save my child.  
Good lady! pardon her.

ABBESS.

What! you can bend  
Your stubborn nature now to supplicate?—  
Can moderate your anger—

ELOISA.

Let the excess of my calamity  
Plead for my rash reproaches: O! remember,  
*They lov'd*, who gave you being; *you lov'd them*:—  
Then, by the recollection of those ties;  
By the maternal breast on which you hung;  
By the benign religion you profess;  
By Him who made us all; I do implore you

H

To

To heap fresh torments on my hated head,  
So you but spare Amelia.—On my knees—

AMELIA [*without*].

My mother—Eloisa!

ELOISA.

'Tis her voice!

ABBESS.

They lead her hither, that her crime may meet  
Its proper chastisement.—

ELOISA.

O pardon, pardon, pardon!—

ABBESS.

No pow'r on earth shall move me.

*Enter AMELIA, FENELON, Priests, Nuns, and  
Attendants.*

FENELON.

Peace to this sad abode.

AMELIA.

My mother

ELOISA.

ELOISA.

My Amelia!

AMELIA.

We come to set you free, to bring you joy.

FENELON.

O superstition! O inhuman fury!

AMELIA.

Behold the virtuous Fenelon!

ELOISA.

Permit me

To embrace your sacred knees, most holy prelate!—

Now, as I live, you weep!

FENELON.

Arise, poor lady!

What have ye done, barbarians as ye are?—

*[To the ABBESS, and Nuns.]*

ABBESS.

Heav'n has decreed for base, rebellious spirits

A heavy punishment.

FENELON.

Heav'n pardons all—

But inhumanity.

FENELON: OR,

ABBESS.

'Twas lawful rigour.

FENELON.

No more—you cannot palliate your crime;  
 Heav'n's will is mercy, and its promise, peace:  
 Where does it authorise such cruelty?  
 The sacred writings teach us tolerance,  
 Not persecution.—O! 'twas vilely done,  
 Thus to pervert a doctrine mild, sublime!  
 Fair sufferer, be consol'd; your ills are over,  
[To ELOISA.  
 And happiness awaits you.

ELOISA.

Man divine!  
 Thou art a true celestial comforter!

ABBESS.

Her father, made indignant by her love,  
 Ill-plac'd and criminal, gave us the *right*  
 To hold her in this just captivity,  
 And force her to repentance.

FENELON.

How! the right?  
 To see her hourly dying, and derive  
 A savage pleasure from her bitter groans?  
 It is a hangman's claim; no longer urge it.

ELOISA.



ELOISA.

What soothing accents, what a godlike mind!  
Shall I again behold the cheerful sun  
Embellish nature with its bounteous beams?  
Yes, Fenelon shall bid it shine on *me*.

FENELON.

Come hither, Eloisa—do not tremble.

ELOISA.

I tremble from respect and gratitude.

FENELON.

I yet may further serve thee.

ELOISA.

Thou art indeed the friend of wretchedness.

FENELON.

Tell all your mind.

ABBESS.

My lord! her reason is disturb'd, I fear;  
And her discourse deserves no heed.

ELOISA.

Perchance  
You are no stranger to my name, my rank,

The

ELO-

The place of my nativity, the ties  
Which bind me to a husband!

ABBESS.

Husband! said she?  
Then I have been too rash.

ELOISA.

Could you inform me of his destiny,  
It would relieve the horrors of suspense,  
Which nature scarce can bear. My heart is *his*,  
Faithful as ever, and as tender too.—  
My father also, know you of his fate?

FENELON.

Your father is no more—he dy'd repentant.

ELOISA.

May Heav'n forgive him!—Daughter of Delmance,  
come,  
My own Amelia, let us join in pray'r  
For our departed parent.

FENELON.

Nay, mourn not thus—  
But let us hope that Delmance is not dead.

ELOISA.

I dare not look to such felicity.—

I

But

THE NUNS OF CAMBRAY.

But say, my lord ! does there remain a chance  
That he may still exist ?

FENELON.

Should he be found  
Hereafter—have you fortitude to bear  
The shock of transport ?

ELOISA.

Sure, in that demand,  
There breathes a prophecy of joy—*Indeed*  
I could encounter, with a steady mind,  
The blissful tidings.

FENELON.

Know, then, Delmance lives.

ELOISA.

Then am I blest at last :  
Nor will I ask if still he think on me.  
He deem'd me dead—the dead are soon forgotten—  
And should he have renew'd the nuptial tie,  
I never will disturb him—all my hope  
Is once more to behold him, to embrace him,  
Give him his child, and die within his arms.

FENELON.

Delmance could ne'er forget the wife he lov'd ;  
His heart entire is your's.

ELO-

FENELON: OR,

ELOISA.

Is't long since you have seen him?

FENELON.

No—this day  
I spoke with him in Cambray.

ELOISA.

Am I alive?

FENELON.

He's here—O give him welcome!

*Enter DELMANCE, and runs to ELOISA.*

DELMANCE.

Eloisa!

ELOISA.

It is himself, I feel him at my heart.

DELMANCE.

Rapture unspeakable!

AMELIA.

He is my father!

ELOISA.

My faithful husband! this, this is your daughter;  
She has sav'd your Eloisa; love her well.

DEL-



DELMANCE.

Sweet maid! receive my blessing.  
Dear pledge of true affection, thou shalt prove  
Henceforth the comforts of parental care.

AMELIA.

My future life shall be devoted to you.

DELMANCE.

How dare you, baleful woman! wear that garb  
[To the ABBESS,  
Of sanctity?—Detested hypocrite!  
I will have ample vengeance.

ABBESS.

I've but obey'd the mandates of our order,  
And scorn your menace.

DELMANCE.

Gaze on Eloisa,  
Think on her suff'rings!

ELOISA.

I have nothing suffer'd,  
For Delmance loves me still—nor speak of vengeance;  
We now should only live for tenderness.

FENELON.

Illustrious victim! quit this horrid cave.

FENELON: OR,

AMELIA (*pointing to ISaura*).

My lord! here is another claims your mercy.

ELOISA.

'Twas kind Isaura's care cherish'd my life—

AMELIA.

And sav'd my helpless infancy—

DELMANCE.

O! tell me how I can reward such merit?

FENELON.

Isaura, speak your wishes.

ISaura.

I request,

If it be not improper, the permission

To leave this wretched cloister, and attend

These friends through ev'ry circumstance of life.

AMELIA.

Death shall alone divide us, dear Isaura!

FENELON.

Your just demand shall be accorded.

ISaura.

THE NUNS OF CAMBRAY.

ISAURA.

Then  
I'm truly happy.—

ABBESS.

Would you, my lord, pretend  
To loose the sacred bonds which hold her here?

FENELON.

I do—

ISAURA.

In truth they were th' unrighteous bonds  
Of hard compulsion.

FENELON.

Abbess, you have heard  
Her sentiments avow'd ;—she shall be free ;  
The vows of rude constraint are never binding.

ABBESS.

'Tis I must answer.

FENELON.

I am responsible.

ABBESS.

Reflect on what you do!

FENE.

FENELON.

I will inform  
The Sovereign Pontiff.

ABBESS.

Will he then absolve  
Her solemn contract?

FENELON.

Nature *has* absolv'd it.

DELMANCE.

O bliss beyond compare—my wife, my daughter!

ABBESS.

Her oath was at the altar.—

FENELON.

Mine, to Heav'n!  
I've sworn to comfort the unfortunate,  
And raise the fallen.—Eloisa, Delmance,  
Amelia, and Isaura, now embrace,  
And look to years of fair prosperity.—  
For you, my lady Abbess! be assur'd  
A signal justice waits your cruelty.  
Thus patient Virtue triumphs over vice;  
And, in the end, benignant Providence  
Exalts the humble, and confounds the base.

THE END.



